

IN SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES.

AUGUST 7, 1848.

Submitted, and ordered to be printed.

Mr. BENTON made the following

REPORT:

The Select Committee of the Senate, on the publication of the debates and proceedings of Congress, appointed to act with the committee of the House of Representatives, respectfully report:

That, on meeting and consultation, the two committees agreed that the subject matter referred to them was very proper for the action in concert of the two Houses, but not for their joint action, and that, consequently, each committee should report separately to its own immediate body. But while reporting separately, in obedience to the constitutional privilege and duty of each House to provide for the publication of its own proceedings, they have the satisfaction to say that they agree entirely in their opinions upon the matter referred to them, and make the same report to each House.

The subject referred to them is one of great importance, and has long occupied the most serious attention of Congress. The publication of the debates and proceedings of Congress is due to the country, and to the members themselves, and is necessary to a proper knowledge of the action of the government. Public opinion is the judge of men and measures under our form of government, and the two Houses of Congress being the great forums for the discussion of public measures, it is to these Houses, and what is said and done in them, that enlightened public opinion must look for much of the material which is to guide its decision.

The publication of the debates and proceedings involves three points of expense and trouble, *to wit*: reporting, printing, and circulating; and each of these, besides, require care and fidelity; and reporting requires peculiar talent and education. Congress, as a body, could not take upon itself the management of a business requiring so much skill, care, expense, and trouble, and accordingly has never attempted it. But the publication of the debates and proceedings, in some form, and to some extent, being imperatively required by public opinion, the newspaper press, at its own cost and trouble, especially at the seat of government, have endeavored to

supply the want, but necessarily to a limited degree, and at great sacrifice of pecuniary interest to itself. The oldest established paper in this city, that of Messrs. Gales & Seaton, is alleged to have paid out an hundred thousand dollars for reporting debates of Congress within the last thirty years; and, no doubt, the other principal papers which undertook to give full reports of debates, paid in the same proportion during the time of their reporting. This mode of publishing is, evidently, too expensive for the newspaper press of this city, and is, besides, imperfect and insufficient, and withdraws from Congress the proper control and supervision of its own proceedings. Authentic publications, under the authority of Congress, and at its expense, has, therefore, been the mode which has suggested itself as the adequate means of making the country acquainted with the debates and proceedings of a body entrusted with the power of national legislation, and exercising so great an influence over public opinion throughout the Union; and this mode of publication has frequently been made the subject matter of anxious consideration before the committees of the two Houses. Plans have been reported by these committees in favor of this mode, but no general system has ever been adopted by the two Houses. A partial system adopted by the Senate, for itself, at the last session, has entirely failed. It has failed at all the points for which reporting is desirable, *to wit*: promptitude, accuracy, and diffusion among the people. It will probably be abandoned. The House of Representatives has no system of its own, and is dependent upon the voluntary services of the public press for the publication of its debates and proceedings, a service which, howsoever well performed for that House during the present session, cannot expect to be continued. Both Houses are, therefore, without any system of reporting its debates and proceedings.

By the constitution each House is to keep a journal of its proceedings, and to publish them. It would be a very narrow construction of this clause of the constitution, and a very insufficient communication of the proceedings of Congress to the people, to confine the publication under this clause to the yeas and nays, and the notices of bills and motions which appear on the journals; nor is such the practice. Reports of committees, and public documents are published in immense numbers, and at a vast expense, and after all without the great object and advantage of publication, that is to say, *diffusion among the people*, unless the newspaper press lends its aid to the republication of what Congress has printed. Publicity is the soul of our government action. The nature of our government, the interest of the country, and the will of the people require publicity; and it is exacted in some form from all the departments of the government. All the acts and communications (with few exceptions) of all the branches of the government, are published. While in the document form they are seen by few, it is through congressional debates that the contents of these documents go to the country. But for the publication and diffusion of the Congress debates, no provision is made; and all other publication is inadequate without that.

Impressed with a full sense of the importance and necessity of reporting and publishing the debates of Congress, and convinced that nothing less than the power of Congress—its power in point of authority and means—is adequate to this object, the committee of the two Houses fully decided upon reporting a plan to their respective Houses to place this business under the control and management of the two Houses, each for itself. The principle being agreed in, the details became points of anxious inquiry. To accomplish the great object in view, two different degrees, or steps in the publication became indispensable. **FIRST**, a prompt publication of the debates of each day on the morning of the following day, and their immediate communication to the people in all parts of the United States. To do this, required the columns of the daily press, and necessarily involved a running report of the debate, to be put to press most usually without revision or correction by the speaker. **SECONDLY**, a revised and corrected publication of the same debates in a durable book form, to constitute the authentic parliamentary history of Congress. Interviews with the practical men and proprietors of the large printing establishments in this city, show that it can be done. The National Intelligencer and the Union, each will undertake to report, print, publish, and circulate through their exchanges and subscribers, the daily debates of Congress. Messrs. Blair & Rives will engage to continue their revised and corrected publication of the same debate in the book form in which it is now done. This is for the daily running debate; and which is to come out on the morning of each day after its delivery, and to appear also in the country edition of the paper. Speeches detained by members for correction and revision will appear, in the daily papers, at the first moment there is room for them, without throwing out the current debate; in the Congressional Register they will appear in an appendix; but the whole running debate may be revised and corrected for prompt publication in the Register, and for that purpose the publisher of the daily reports will be required to deliver to each member a copy of the morning paper, that he may see how he is reported in each, and correct it immediately, if he chooses, and send it to the Congressional Register to take its permanent place in the book form.

The committee have resolved that there should be two daily papers, one of each political party, to publish the current debates; and this for obvious reasons. It is idle to quarrel with human nature. Two parties exist, have existed, and will exist, in this as in all free governments; and it is in vain for the party in power to endeavor to monopolize advantages, and wrong in itself, and often politically injurious, to give one-sided information to the public. The plan proposed for the publication of the current daily debates puts each party upon an equality; and, what is more, it enables the readers and copyists from each paper to see the whole debate on both sides, and thus escape the evils of one-sided and partial information. The revised and corrected debates in the book form having nothing of the party character of a political paper, and containing nothing but the debates and proceedings, do not require two estab-

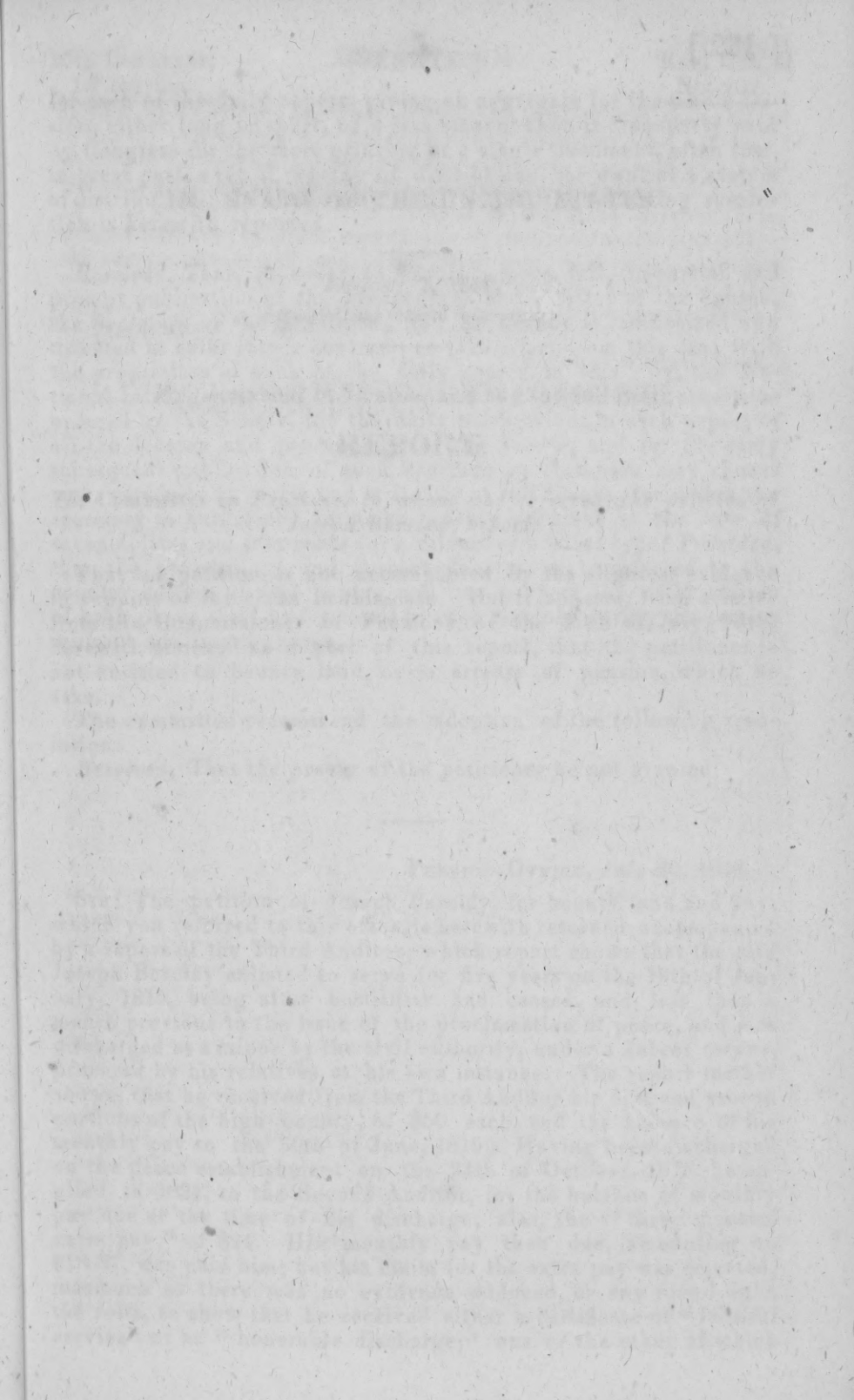
lishments to print them, and are therefore proposed to be left in the faithful and competent hands in which they now are.

This is the plan which has recommended itself to the committees of the two Houses, as combining all the advantages proper to be obtained by the publication of the debates and proceedings of Congress; an object which requires a double publication—one in the daily press, for the daily information of the people, and one in the book form, for the permanent preservation of the debates and proceedings.

The committee have conferred with the proprietors of the printing establishments referred to, and find them ready to engage in the business according to the plan proposed. The expense, and the proper mode of making the compensation, was the next object of inquiry with the committee; and for this purpose, the actual expense of reporting, printing, publishing, and circulating the debates and proceedings of Congress by the daily papers has been carefully ascertained. That expense is found to be about five dollars for reporting the quantity contained in one column, brevier type, of the Union or Intelligencer, and about two dollars fifty cents for the composition, or setting up the same in type. Then follows the expense of paper, ink, press-work, folding, packing, directing, exchange papers, and distribution throughout the Union. The expense of each of these items is considerable; of the whole, it is large, and the two last alone, far beyond what uninformed persons would suppose. The distribution alone, including folding, packing, directing, &c., employs six or seven persons at night wages, with the comforts of fire in the winter, and lights always. The expense of exchange papers is great, from the great number of exchanges in which the liberality of the American press indulges, and almost a dead loss to the large daily papers, from the little use which they can make of the contents of the papers received in exchange, from the crowded local demands upon their own columns. Yet this is an expense indispensable to the communication of the contents of the paper to other newspapers throughout the Union, and thus to the people. Heavy, then, are the expenses of the papers, and requiring the working of a large system of exchanges and distribution before the debates of Congress, after being reported and put in type, can reach the eye of the people in the thirty States of this Union, and go to foreign countries. Yet this part of the expense, with all its attendant labor, the proprietors of the Intelligencer and of the Union are willing to take upon themselves in diffusing the debates and proceedings of Congress, provided Congress will defray the expense of the two first items, the reporting and composition. This the committee consider not only just, but generous, and have the gratification to say that the expense thus incurred will not only be small in comparison to the greatness of the object attained, but insignificant, compared to the expense of attempting to give information to the people through the multiplication of public documents. The weekly expense is computed at between four and five hundred dollars during the sessions of Congress

for each of the daily papers, giving an aggregate for the whole session, either long or short, of a less amount than is frequently paid by Congress for the mere printing of a single document, often lost, in great part, even if worthy of distribution, for want of a system of distribution. In conformity to all which, the following resolution is herewith reported:

Resolved, That, in order to secure a more full, impartial and prompt publication of the proceedings and debates of the Senate, the Secretary of the Senate be, and he hereby is, authorized and directed to enter into a contract, to take effect from this day, with the proprietors of each of the daily papers in this city, the National Intelligencer and the Union, and to continue until otherwise ordered by the Senate, for the daily publication, in each paper, of all the debates and proceedings of the Senate, and for the early subsequent publication of such speeches as members may choose more carefully to revise and write out at full length, for which the secretary is authorized to make weekly payment at the rate of seven dollars and fifty cents for a column of brier type; *Provided*, that the proceedings and current debates be transferred to the country edition of said papers, and one copy of the daily edition of each paper shall be furnished to each member during the session without additional charge.



REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONER OF THE GENERAL LAND OFFICE

FOR THE YEAR 1881

IN RESPONSE TO A RESOLUTION OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

REPORT

The Commission of the General Land Office has the honor to acknowledge the receipt of a resolution of the House of Commons, passed on the 14th of March 1881, relative to the management of the public lands. The Commission has the pleasure to inform you that the same has been carefully considered, and that the following report is submitted in compliance with the same.

The Commission has the honor to inform you that the same has been carefully considered, and that the following report is submitted in compliance with the same. The Commission has the honor to inform you that the same has been carefully considered, and that the following report is submitted in compliance with the same. The Commission has the honor to inform you that the same has been carefully considered, and that the following report is submitted in compliance with the same.